

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in a dark brown color, framing the central text.

**blood stains,
speed kills, fast
cars, cheap
thrills**

orangesparks

blood stains, speed kills, fast cars, cheap thrills by orangesparks

Series: [desperate to survive \[1\]](#)

Category: IT (2017), IT - Stephen King

Genre: #BEVERLY MARSH DESERVED BETTER 2017, F/M, Gen, M/M, being generous w warnings just to be safe, no more so than the book/movie but, spoilers for the 2017 movie, the M tag is for violence lol thaaanks, underage characters in grey situations

Language: English

Characters: Belch Huggins, Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Gretta Keene, Henry Bowers, Mike Hanlon, Patrick Hockstetter, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris, Victor Criss

Relationships: Beverly Marsh & Henry Bowers, Beverly Marsh & the Bowers Gang, Beverly Marsh & the Losers Club, Henry Bowers & Patrick Hockstetter, Patrick Hockstetter & Beverly Marsh

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-09-11

Updated: 2017-09-11

Packaged: 2020-01-20 16:15:24

Rating: Mature

Warnings: Graphic Depictions Of Violence

Chapters: 1

Words: 5,808

Publisher: [archiveofourown.org](#)

Summary:

At the beginning of it all, if some kid had been brave (or dumb) enough to ask why she hung with them, she'd say:

Because they have a car.

And she's sure it would sound shallow, but it was the God's honest truth, and fuck anyone who would judge her for it, anyway.

blood stains, speed kills, fast cars, cheap thrills

Author's Note:

The new "history" assigned to Bev and the bullies in the movie struck me as odd, so this was my attempt to figure out why the Losers would so readily believe those rumors. (Still unhappy with the backstory and plot changes made for Bev, especially in the third act, but that's another story.)

Though set in the 2017 movie-verse (1989 vs 1958; Gretta Keene vs Greta Bowie; characters' histories/home lives are slightly altered; etc), this is still fleshed out with some book details.

ETA: If you're interested in listening to any of the music/artists mentioned in this series, there is a [companion mixtape here](#).

*They'll teach you what you need to learn
Then they will take you for a ride...*

-Agent Orange

"Rest in hell."

-Alice Johnson, *Nightmare on Elm Street 4: The Dream Master*

-

August 1988

Beverly Marsh's involvement with the Bowers gang had truly lasted

no more than three weeks, but the effects were lingering enough to haunt her for the rest of the school year.

At the beginning of it all, if some kid had been brave (or dumb) enough to ask why she hung with them, she'd say:

Because they have a car.

And she's sure it would sound shallow, but it was the God's honest truth, and fuck anyone who would judge her for it, anyway.

(And yeah, sure, it made her feel older - but fuck that. Lots of things made her feel older. It wasn't the great feeling she thought it would be back in her grade school days.)

The whole thing started by accident, anyway. Only because she was a big enough loser to be at the movies by herself on Friday night, grateful to get out of the apartment for a couple hours since her Dad wouldn't be home from the hospital 'til late.

It was a nasty-looking horror picture, the latest Freddy Krueger, and the commercials had been appealingly gross enough to catch her interest. (She'd liked the last few, at least, and that was enough to convince her it was the right choice.)

Not even a year ago, she'd have asked Ellie Geiger if she wanted to come. But Ellie had been getting closer to Gretta Keene and Sally Mueller and the rest of their delightful little clique ever since joining the field hockey team, and, as a result - further from Bev. She told herself she didn't care, but it still stung. Friends were a rare commodity lately. Middle school sucked.

Maybe that's why she was so interested in movies these days - especially the gang of kids in the one she was watching, kids who fought for each other, not just against sneering class bullies or abusive parents but against Freddy fucking *Krueger*.

The gym rat who put boys in their place with her barbed comebacks was pretty cool, and so was the nerdy girl who assembled complicated gadgets without even blinking, but Beverly's favorite by far was the last one standing - Alice.

Alice, with her pale red hair and slouching posture and cruel father. Alice, who learned to stand up for herself, land the hot guy, kick Freddy Krueger's ass.

She loved horror movies, but never before had one left her euphoric.

She was still reeling from it when the credits finished (the usher glared and made a show of banging his broom and dustpan extra loud when she finally sauntered out, the very last to leave). This was the only reason she wandered into the lobby so giddily, licking the last of popcorn salt from her fingers, oblivious to fucking everything until she saw just who was leaning against the arcade machines - Henry Bowers and Belch Huggins, the only other patrons left, chugging sodas she suspected they'd dumped alcohol into.

Shit.

Their dislike of underclassmen was well-renowned at school, and though she hadn't yet heard about them extending their bullying to girls, she wasn't taking any chances.

(Hey - if she didn't have any friends these days, may as well use it to her advantage. Stay completely invisible. Invisible kids didn't get bullied.)

She walked as casually as she could past them (a vision of herself as the Keep On Truckin' guy popped into her brain), wishing she hadn't stayed until the end of the credits, hadn't thought that knowing the name of that Dramarama song was so fucking necessary, and kept her eyes straight forward, not even looking to see if they'd noticed her.

(If I can't see them, they can't see me, she thought deliriously, the ridiculous game she played with closet monsters as a child.)

It was only once she'd collapsed on the bus stop bench twenty yards away from the theater that she heaved a sigh of relief.

That sigh of relief turned into a muttered curse after looking at her watch and realizing that staying for the credits had made her miss the last bus home.

Great. Avoided one hell and stumbled into another. Daddy will definitely

be home by the time I walk back.

He wouldn't yell, no, but so much worse, he would narrow his eyes and pull her close and ask just *what* she was getting up to so late at night, and who with, because nice girls don't stay out this late and that's what makes him question whether--

(are you still my girl?)

(no i'm not, i'm not i'm not i'm not since mama left and you-- you changed--)

The movie seemed like even more of a pipe dream now. She felt foolish for thinking she had any right to compare herself to its heroine. Alice stood up to her father, stood up to the monster. Beverly ran from teenage schoolboys and was already inventing twenty excuses she could give her Dad so he'd pay her the least amount of attention possible when she finally got home forty minutes past midnight.

Better start now, idiot. Don't make things worse.

She picked herself up from the bench, uttering a groan purely for her own benefit (because making dramatic noises about it sated her frustration, if only a fraction) and hummed the Dramarama song under her breath.

She made it about thirty feet when she heard the engine purring next to her.

A brief glance out of the corner of her eye confirmed her fear - it was Belch's Trans Am, dark blue paint job looking almost black under the dim street lights.

Goddamn. Didn't that movie tire them out at all? Does Henry's shitty racist cop dad give them a gold star if they find a new kid to pick on once a week or something?

She considered trying to make a run for it, but dismissed the idea almost immediately. There was nothing surrounding her but wide, open road. They'd catch up to her before she even got a stitch in her side.

She settled for ignoring them. Maybe-- maybe they really *weren't* following her.

(Yeah, right, Bev. Keep dreaming, you dumb bitch.)

I can't see you, you can't see me, she chanted inside her head, ignoring the other voice telling her she needed to haul ass immediately. She'd just ignore them, and eventually they'd--

"Hey!" yelled someone from inside the car.

It sounded like Henry, but she was trying so hard to ignore them that she couldn't tell, didn't fucking care. She walked faster.

The Trans Am followed her.

Shit. Shit, shit, shit, shitting shit.

"Want a ride?"

She nearly stumbled over a jagged piece of sidewalk.

-

The back of Belch's car was tiny (and her rapidly growing legs were all too aware of it), but she could only imagine how much more cramped she'd be if the other two hyenas in Henry's gang were present and grateful for more than one reason that this wasn't the case (these days just about the only thing she could agree with those assholes Gretta and Sally on was just how *creepy* Patrick Hockstetter was).

In all honesty - she was still waiting. Waiting for the punchline of some bad joke to kick in, maybe even for the backseat to pop up a giant spring and eject her from the fucking car, like something out of the old Batman TV show.

Two of the biggest bullies in the entire school offered her - some kid two whole years younger than them (a girl who the popular girls fucking *hated*) - a ride home.

Maybe she fell asleep during the movie. Maybe she was still in the theater and none of this was even happening. She dug her fingernails into her palm, hard, checking to see if she was in fact awake.

The skin broke. She hissed, nursing her palm. Okay, definitely awake.

Maybe they just saw The Breakfast Club and were so inspired by Judd Nelson they decided to extend gang membership to the least popular kids at school.

She snorted at the thought. Luckily, the Megadeth blaring from the speakers masked the sound of her laughing to herself like a weirdo (which would definitely give them enough ammo to *start* picking on her, since for some reason they already hadn't).

The other shoe would drop eventually. There was no rational explanation for her getting into this car, other than pure fear at the thought of Daddy getting home before her (*driven by courage, as usual*, she thought, nearly choking on her bitterness), just like there was no rational explanation for them offering her a ride. The whole situation was freaking her out more than the part in the movie where the girl's arms melted off and she turned into a giant cockroach.

Say, guys, speaking of - what was your favorite part of that wonderful motion picture? she thought sarcastically. (No need to answer. She had a feeling that one of them - likely Belch - was the charmer who yelled "Take your shirt off!" during Alice's training montage.)

What's next tonight, gang? We gonna go rob a candy store? Go lean on some cars?

But before she knew it, they were already idling in front of her apartment. Her heart nearly burst with excitement when she realized her father's rusting Chevy pick-up was nowhere to be seen.

"Thank you so much," she told them. "Really."

Belch looked as surprised by the sincerity in her tone as she was at the fact that she would ever find herself in debt to them. Henry said nothing, just stepped out and flipped the seat forward so she could climb out. Didn't offer so much as a wave. Forgetting all niceties, she

bolted to the door (on the off-chance her Dad pulled up any second, with her fucking luck he *would*), fumbling with the key around her neck. Just as she swung the door open, she glanced back at the car. Henry was still watching her when it drove off.

-

Next Monday after class, Belch Huggins and Victor Criss were blocking her locker.

"Scuse me," she muttered, wondering if her arm was long enough to slice through them and reach it, but Victor's scowl told her their placement there was intentional.

"Henry wants you," he said, flicking a hank of bleached hair from his eye.

"Why?" she asked dumbly.

She barely had a moment to grab her things before they strong-armed her into marching down the hall between them. If *that* weren't embarrassing enough, of fucking course Gretta Keene just happened to be passing by, field hockey bag slung over her shoulder and lackey in tow. Her lip curled when she noticed Beverly practically sandwiched between the two older boys.

"Hey, Beaverly!" she crooned. "How you gonna take that test in English tomorrow? Won't your hand be cramped from jerking them off in that backseat?"

Why are you jealous, Gretta? she wanted to ask. *Does hanging with these assholes really look like that much of a party? Two of them are trolls and the other two are honest to God psychopaths. The only reason I'm tolerating it is because, all in all--*

(i'm a fucking coward, that's the short and long of it)

"Why do you care? You want a turn?" is what she spat out instead. Vic Criss surprised her by cackling loudly. His approval was enough to make Gretta flush dark red, and she stomped off in the opposite

direction, *cronie du jour* following awkwardly in her wake.

"*Shit*. What'd you do to piss her off so bad?" wondered Belch.

Do we have the time? thought Bev. But even if she were in a sharing mood (which she definitely wasn't), she doubted these two - or any boys at all - held the intellectual capacity to even begin to fathom the complexity of animosity that could occur between teenage girls. When someone in Henry's crew was mad at someone, they'd simply bloody said target's face and call it a day. Girls didn't have that option. More creative measures were necessary. For whatever reason, Gretta had set her sights on Bev back in sixth grade and had only been getting more creative as the years went on.

"Bitter ex-lover," she deadpanned, and though Victor snickered, Belch gave her a long, suspicious look, as if he couldn't tell whether she was joking or not.

Henry and Patrick were already waiting by Belch's Trans Am by the time the three of them made it outside. They passed Trashmouth Tozier, waiting for his friends as he paged through a comic book, cross-legged on the lawn (the new *X-Force*, by the looks of it). By the way Belch's eyes narrowed, she had the feeling their assignment of "delivering" her to Henry was the only thing keeping her babysitters from slamming the boy's face into the dirt after feeding him his own comic.

As if he could hear her thoughts, Tozier suddenly tilted his head up to stare at them. His mouth snapped open, but Beverly silenced him with a warning look. He could be kind of a douchebag, but he was mostly okay, and Victor and Belch could easily put him in the hospital. It wasn't worth whatever *menage a trois* comment he looked so eager to make.

Cool it, she mouthed at him.

Fuck off, he mouthed back.

She rolled her eyes, but they made it past him unscathed, and she couldn't deny the shudder of relief she felt.

If she was expecting a friendly greeting from Henry this time, she needed a better Tarot deck, because the most acknowledgement she got was his eyes raking over her before he barked, "Let's go!" at Belch. As the larger boy climbed behind the wheel, Victor and Patrick hopped into the back, spreading out over the entire seat. Suddenly awkward, Beverly stood there, unsure how to proceed. Walking home seemed suddenly much more appealing, especially when Patrick leered at her, patting his lap.

"Don't be shy."

"Move!" snarled Henry. Patrick gave him a baleful look.

"No."

Before Henry could dislocate the other boy's shoulder, Vic Criss heaved a long-suffering sigh.

"Hell, *I'll* go. Fuck this."

Squeezing his skinny frame out of the car and past her, he shot her a dirty look. *Thanks a lot, Yoko Ono*, is what that look said. She flipped him the bird as she took his place, careful to keep as far as she could from Patrick. Victor was only a year older than her, anyway, so who the hell was he to think he had more of a claim to cruising around town with the older kids than her? Not like it was *his* car. And truth be told, if it came to it, she wouldn't have even minded sitting on someone's lap, long as she got as far away from home as she could, at least for a little while.

Naturally, Henry claimed shotgun, slinging his arm through the open window and drumming his fingers on the side of the door.

"Go."

They peeled out.

-

At some point over the next few days, Vic Criss rejoined the backseat,

either because he decided he hated her less or because he hated riding the bus more (most likely the latter), but she gladly let him act as a buffer between her and Patrick, whose sweaty hand always "accidentally" migrated to her thigh whenever they were alone back there (and seemed only amused instead of put off by her whispered threats that he'd better move his fingers before she broke every single one).

Other than the night of the movie, they never dropped her directly at home, which was the reason she saw no harm in keeping things up. (At first she thought they had recognized her terror and relief that first time, somehow instinctively knowing that outside her apartment wasn't the wisest place to leave her, but she wouldn't give either Henry or Belch credit for being *that* intuitive, and chalked it up to not wanting to waste gas driving her all the way to the slummy side of town.) Usually they dumped her off first, somewhere not too far from Lower Main Street, then went on their merry little way, probably to terrorize other kids her age, hock loogies, or other, equally mature things.

So one Friday, when Victor and Patrick were dropped off first, she didn't think much of it. It was nice, stretching her legs in the backseat, and even though the Metallica blaring from the speakers wouldn't be her personal choice of tunes (The Cramps currently held that honor), it was miles better than home.

"Here," Henry said in a low voice, after they'd been driving awhile longer. The car came to a halt in the middle of a field, as far from town as one could get.

He lived nowhere near here, but maybe he wanted to practice shooting bottles or something. Somewhere his dad wouldn't hear him. (And, hey - she certainly wasn't one to judge acts of cowardice inspired by fathers.)

But when Henry climbed out of the car, he tilted his vacated seat forward and looked at her.

"Yeah?" she said eloquently.

"Get out."

She glanced at Belch. But he wouldn't look at her, eyes on the steering wheel, gripping it tightly. There was something off about the whole thing. And it raised the hair on the back of her arms, because if Belch of all people was nervous about something--

"You coming?" she asked, noticing he hadn't killed the engine.

"He isn't," Henry said, annoyed that she wasn't already out of the car.

The only explanation for obliging his request was boredom or stupidity.

(Both, probably.)

She climbed out, and Belch threw one last look at Henry before peeling off, leaving them alone.

As they walked through the field, it occurred to her that it wasn't that she trusted Henry - it was that she absolutely didn't.

She didn't, and was waiting for him to try something. For his mask of civility to fall, for him to try beating her bloody the way he had so many other kids in her class.

That was the truly fucked up thing. She was *expecting* it. Expecting it to the point that she wanted him to try. Wanted him to try, so she had an excuse to go absolutely fucking apeshit, rail on him, fuck him up as bad as he'd ever fucked up anyone else.

(as bad as you wish you could mess up your own dear ol' Da--)

"Beverly," he said, suddenly, just as she became lost in her own thoughts. She startled. It was the first time he called her by her actual name, and not just *hey*, or *you*, or *in the car*.

Slowly, she turned, body tensing. Waiting for the sudden scrape of knuckle against her cheek, or flash of switchblade reflecting the dying sunlight. Victor and Patrick to come running, chuckling, out of their hiding places to assist him.

Instead, he was looking at her. No, not just looking-- *staring*. Almost in a daze. It was an odd expression on him, lacking his usual menace.

He looked like he was going to say something else, but then he blinked, almost as if snapping himself out of it, and pointed to a creek not far in the distance. She recognized it as leading to the nearby quarry. Lots of kids liked to hang out there, sun themselves; occasionally do some diving, if brave enough. She never took him for the type to be into that sort of thing, unless maybe he was forcing someone else to take a dive against their will. Weird, maybe, but she'd keep on guard.

She nodded, and followed him.

-

"Did you want to swim or something?" she asked.

"No."

She frowned. He hadn't brought his slingshot, and she'd forgotten hers at home (tucked safely under her mattress, next to her emergency cigarettes). They couldn't practice shooting. There was literally nothing else to do here.

"We don't even need swimsuits. You could just take your shirt off, and I guess I could--"

"No." His tone left no room for argument. She let up, unsure why that suggestion in particular would strike such a nerve. Then again, they were in the middle of nowhere, no music, no food, no nothing. What else could he want to do?

(you know, don't you, slutchild, don't pretend you don't--)

She ignored that pesky voice in the back of her mind, its chiding rising to almost a wail.

If he wanted to sit in silence awhile, away from the rattle of heavy metal echoing inside that car and the ogre-like laughs of his buddies, she supposed she couldn't fault him that. The question still begged why he wanted *her* here for it. Her subconscious had an answer to that one, too, though--

(being with people you don't like is bad, true, but sometimes being alone is even worse)

--and in an instant, she knew.

She'd seen his body tense when his father patrolled the school, the hunch of his shoulders, the nervous way he would rub the top of his back when he didn't think any of the others were looking--

Well, *shit*.

I understand, she thought. *Him doing that stuff to you doesn't make it all right for you to take it out on everybody else, but--*

Against her better judgment, she laid a hand on his forearm. He stiffened.

--I understand. Yeah, you're horrible. But I think I have a pretty good idea why. Fuck him.

His gaze was trained on her hand. Slowly, he raised his eyes to hers. She tried smiling - trying to be reassuring, somehow - but her face just felt stiff. She was sad.

Not just sad - she was so fucking *angry*. Angry for him, for herself. Wondering why some people were special enough to be gifted with kind, caring parents, and why others could never even fucking dream of having the same opportunity.

He suddenly twisted closer, clasping his hand over hers. She tried to pull her hand back, but he tightened his grip. She swallowed, throat suddenly dry.

"Henry--"

He surged forward, pressing chapped lips to hers in a sudden, violent kiss.

(She'd gotten things wrong, as usual.)

He tangled a hand into her hair, pulling her close, biting her lip. For a moment - just one one-thousandth of a second - she considered

letting him continue, just to see what it was like, what all the older kids seemed to live and die for, see if things had changed much since that one sweet moment she'd shared with Bill Denbrough back in third grade... but that seemed unkind, somehow, like she'd be using him to sate her curiosity, and so with trepidation she pushed him away.

It was difficult - he would *not* let go of her hand - but she yanked until he finally got the idea and loosened his grip. She rubbed at her sore wrist.

"I'm sorry," she offered, lamely.

Good one, dummy. Of all the fucking things to say--

She winced in reflex, waiting for the string of insults, for his voice to rise to that nasty pitch it sometimes did when he was passionately screaming at whoever had earned his ire. For him to shove her, knock her over the cliff and into the quarry, give her an impromptu drowning lesson.

Instead, he slowly sat down, staring out over the quarry. Refusing to look at her.

Maybe she should have expected it all along - why the fuck else would he develop a sudden interest in hanging around with some girl a few grades below his? - but that one naive

(stupid)

part of her had wanted to believe deep down, maybe he *had* recognized something in common between them, that they were more alike than different when it came to how they felt about certain things (how they were treated by certain people in their lives), that had made him want to reach out for a connection.

She was a fucking idiot.

"I'm sorry," she said again, quietly, but she didn't think he heard her this time.

He was still staring down at the quarry when she finally left.

-

She obviously didn't expect the carpool parties to keep up after that, which was why Patrick Hockstetter waiting at her locker on Monday morning was a shock.

"He... wants to see me?" she asked, confused, but Patrick just smirked and strolled down the hall, crooking his finger for her to follow him. It took her until they were nearly outside to realize he was leading her someplace other than the street where Belch Huggins usually parked - they were at the South side of the building, with the exit that faced the woods. She trailed after him, puzzled.

"Why--" she started to ask, but then Patrick was looming over her, pushing her against rough brick, clammy hands stroking up and down her arms.

"What the *fuck*," she spat. She shoved him away, hard. Despite his towering over her, she still managed to knock him back a few feet, his lean, spidery build working to her advantage. But rather than getting angry - he *laughed*, a whispery, shuddering giggle. The sound made her teeth itch.

"What's wrong? This too public for you?"

"What are you talking about?"

"I know you guys did it by the quarry, but this should be good enough." His tone was creeping toward petulant. "C'mon. We can be quick. Done before first period starts. Then you can go tell him you liked it. And then, we can share him."

Her blood froze.

"Excuse me?"

But he was already reaching for her again, so she raised her fists, putting distance between them, teeth bared.

"Don't. Touch me. Again."

In an instant, Patrick's face went dark.

"He's not what you think he is. He let me touch it first, y'know. So don't go thinking you're special." He slunk back into the school before she could even react.

This was information she never, ever needed. But it was still riding shotgun to the very sinking feeling that things had been said this weekend that everyone except her had been made privy to.

That feeling was confirmed that afternoon when Gretta was more brutal than usual in her lunch tray body checks, nearly knocking her to the ground.

"Sorry, Bevvie. Maybe if you kept your legs closed more often you wouldn't have such a problem keeping your balance."

"I didn't do anything," Beverly hissed at her, but Gretta kept walking, jaw clenched. This, more than anything, spurred her to run outside after her last class, making damn sure that stupid Trans Am didn't leave before she could have a little chat with one of its occupants.

She didn't know what she planned to say - she didn't have a speech, or anything - but the "*What the fuck?*" she settled for shouting at Henry was probably near the top of the list.

He glanced up at her, so very casually, as if she were a stranger and not someone he'd only the other day convinced his buddies to set up (what surely counted in his mind as) a "romantic" getaway with.

"Need something?" he sneered. She heard snickers. Kids were watching, listening. She didn't care.

"What have you been saying about me?"

"I gave you good reviews. Don't worry. Four stars, inside every first floor boys' room."

More laughter. This time she saw red.

"Hey, sweetheart, I know you're eager, but we should wait 'til later

to--"

She slugged him.

-

In the end, Victor Criss dragging her away was what saved her from Henry breaking his unstated "no hitting girls" rule.

(She hoped he didn't think he was doing her a favor. Because she wasn't so sure it would have been all that fixed a fight. Anger, white-hot and dangerous, was still pulsing through her veins; all in all, she could have done Henry some pretty serious damage if given the opportunity.)

"He's lying," she said, quietly, right before Victor went to rejoin the others. The way he averted his eyes told her-- he knew.

Well, cool. Thanks a lot, fuckface. I'm sure you're pleased as punch now that you've finally got your leg room back in the car now.

By the end of the week, word around school was she hadn't just messed around with Henry - she'd been with all four of them. Took turns in the back of Belch's Trans Am.

Gretta and Sally gleefully did their part to spread the rumors, and next thing she knew, she had been passed around at Joanie Arnot's party the following weekend, too.

I don't even know Joanie Arnot, but whatever. Please don't let that dry up your creative juices, guys. In fact, do me a solid and just tell everyone that River Phoenix was my latest conquest, since I've done as much with him as I ever have with Belch fucking Huggins.

The other kids being shitty? That, she could take plenty of. Was used to it, anyway. But Mrs. Wilcox, who had been her favorite teacher at the beginning of the semester (one of the only adults she had felt she could trust in this stupid school) had started looking at her with a wilted, sour look; as if Beverly had deeply disappointed her. It was this that made her want to grab Henry by his stupid neck every time

she saw him laughing in the hallways and just-- just *squeeze*, because who the fuck was he to take that away from her, just because she dared to be so evil as to not want to kiss him back?

You piece of shit, she thought, fury trickling down her spine. *I felt sorry for you.*

And that was exactly it, she realized. She had never liked him. He had never even been particularly nice to her; hell, Belch and even Victor had shown her more amiability in those few short weeks than he ever had (the former buying her a chocolate shake when she was short on change at the McDonald's drive-thru, the latter sneaking smokes between classes with her a few times).

No, Henry had never been nice to her. Nothing even remotely resembling what a friend should be. He had just been... *sad*. And like the fool she was, she'd related to that sadness; fallen for it.

I felt sorry for you, she thought, but the venom was gone now. Instead she just felt numb.

-

July 1989

When she and her friends saw Belch's car parked crookedly on the side of the road, the homeschool boy's bike abandoned next to it, she had already been preparing herself for the worst; she'd never seen the physical side of their menace, but had heard plenty about it in the hallways.

But when she saw the boy's face smashed against the granite, crying for help, raw meat dribbling red over his skin as Henry and Belch and Victor shoved him down and *laughed*--

Beverly grabbed the first rock she saw, jagged and big. Heaved it against Henry's skull with all the force she could muster. He went down immediately.

"Nice throw," said Stan Uris. It was the first kind thing he'd ever said to her. She thanked him, keeping her gaze trained on Henry.

"You losers are trying too hard," he grinned when he staggered to his feet, blood trickling down his forehead. Nonchalant, as if he hadn't just had the air knocked out of him by a girl. "She'll do you. You just gotta ask nicely, like I did."

He grabbed himself suggestively as they made eye contact, and her stomach clenched in disgust. His tone was light, but she'd noticed his face when he first took in the sight of her with her new friends, the way his eyes narrowed.

Just like Daddy, you've got things all wrong. I know that friends are a foreign concept to you, but get a clue. Fucker.

This time it was little Ben Hanscom who uttered a furious roar before throwing at Henry, knocking him backward. She felt her heart nearly burst with pride.

"Rock war!" shrieked Richie, right before getting beamed in the forehead. She was liking him more every day.

She bent and seized another rock. This time she threw at Victor, and he didn't look quite so annoyed by her presence now. Now, he was looking something closer to frightened.

She liked it. A lot.

"Fuck you, bitch!" Belch screamed. As if she owed them anything.

She smiled, grimly.

Don't worry, fella. Just remember what you've been telling everyone at school. There's plenty of me to go around.

She aimed for him next.

August 1989

Freddy Krueger plunged his knives into the girl's stomach, blood spraying over the elaborate banquet table.

"Fuckin' gross!" Richie yelled. Stan elbowed him in the side, hard.

"Shhhh."

"Well, it is!"

Beverly shook her head, grabbing a handful of popcorn from the bucket resting on Bill's lap. He glanced over at her and rolled his eyes, grinning. She smiled back.

The Dream Child wasn't nearly as good as the last Freddy movie. (Them being released less than a year apart from each other likely had something to do with that.) There were some shallow reasons for liking it less on Beverly's part, she'd admit - Alice was suddenly *blonde* - but it just wasn't as engaging. The characters weren't as interesting, the kills not as creative. (That, and Richie's constant commentary - as well as Stan and Eddie trying in vain to shut him up - had made about a third of the movie's dialogue nearly inaudible.)

But she'd be lying if she said she wasn't having a hell of a lot more fun this time.

Once they'd convinced Mike to go with them ("...you guys know this movie is rated R, right?" "Hey, homeschool, you know this theater doesn't care about corrupting minors as long as they rake in popcorn sales, right?"), and Eddie finished lecturing everyone about a street drug inspired by the movies that would probably become available in Derry soon ("They did, like, a whole special about it on Dick Cavett, so I'm just saying, don't fuck around with that shit!"), they snagged themselves seven seats in the very last row.

As Freddy executed his latest kill, she snuck a glance at her friends' reactions: Stan's brow creased in deep thought, Eddie clutching his armrests, Mike's lips twisted into a grimace, Richie looking grossed out and impressed all at once, Ben's mouth agape, Bill frozen with a

handful of popcorn half-way raised to his mouth. Crazy, how something as simple as seeing a movie with her friends made her feel so... content. Safe.

The theater let out a collective scream.

"Fuckin' A!" yelled Richie.

"Shut the fuck up!" hissed Eddie.

Grinning, she grabbed another handful of popcorn.